1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
814 Abipon 814



756 787 769 standing, used many arguments to convince me that he had with his own eyes beheld the spirit of an Indian woman, whose husband was then living in our town. Spaniards also, who have lived from boyhood in captivity amongst the Abipones, are quite persuaded that the shades of the dead become visible at the call of a necromancer, that they reply to questions, and that there is no deceit used in the business. But what sensible man would credit such witnesses, who are in the daily habit of deceiving and being deceived?

775 But from this custom of the savages of calling up the shades of the dead, we may deduce that they believe in the immortality of the soul, as may also be collected both from their rites and conversation. They place a pot, a garment, [769] arms, and horses, fastened on stakes upon graves, that the dead may not be in want of the daily necessaries of life. They have an idea, that [825] those little ducks, which the Abipones call *ruililiè*, and which fly about in flocks at night, uttering a mournful hiss, are the souls of the departed. The Spaniard Raphael de los Rios, [648] who superintended the estate belonging to the town of St. Jeronymo, was cruelly murdered in his tent, in an assault of the savages, whilst I resided there. Some months after, an Abiponian catechumen came and anxiously enquired

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
814 Abipon 814



self and for his people, and shortly after conquered and slain by Cortez.

Let us now return to the superstitions of the Abipones, who think another star, the name of which I have forgotten, portentous, formidable, and destructive. They say that those years in which this star has been seen have always proved bloody and disastrous to their nation. When a whirlwind drives the dust round in a circle, the women throw ashes in its way, that it may be satisfied with that food, and may turn in some other direction. But if the wind rushes into any house with that impetuous whirling, they are certain that one of the inhabitants will die soon. If any live bees be found in the honey-comb, which they bring from the woods, they say that they must be killed out of doors, imagining, that if this be done within the house, they shall never be able to find any more honey.

The Abipones labour under many superstitions, because they abound in jugglers, the teachers of superstition. The most famous at the time that I lived there, were Hanetrâln, Nahagalkln, Oaikin, Kaëperlahachin, Pazanoirin, Kaachl, Kepakainkin, Laamamin, and Pariekaikin, the first, and by far the most eminent of them all, who had obtained a high reputation for his prophecies and other peculiarities of his office. Female jugglers abound to such a de-

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
S14 Abipon S14



immediately enter the house. These animals suddenly make their appearance in apartments built of brick or stone, and covered with tiles, when the door and windows are close shut, and not a chink is left unstopped. One of my companions had such a dread of serpents, that he never dared take any sleep till he had examined every corner of his apartment. There are some snakes which leap at all they meet, and bite ferociously. Paraguay also produces some harmless ones, which are either devoid of poison, or the desire to use it, unless they be offended.

Who does not know that some serpents lay eggs, whilst others produce a numerous living offspring? The Americans believe that young serpents grow from the dead bodies of the old ones. Hence, whenever they kill any serpents they remove them to a great distance from their houses, and do not throw them on the ground, but hang them on trees or hedges. In Brazil, two Jesuit missionaries found a horrid-looking dead snake to which a young live one was clinging, and, on their shaking the carcass with sticks, eleven little serpents crawled from it. This account of serpents is closed by three insects, akin to each other in the quality of their venom. The Scolopendra, which has a smooth cylindrical body a span long, twice as thick as a man's thumb, and covered with a hard, cine-

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
814 Abipon 814



shaken by one of my companions, who found a snake in the garden close to a plant of it. But the leaves of a plant are endued with different properties from its roots and fruit. May not the garlick alone, and not the leaves, be the object of the serpent's abhorrence? The Abipones and Mocobios suspend a crocodile's tooth from their neck or arm, thinking it a powerful amulet against snakes of every kind. In this they are imitated by many Missionaries and Spaniards, who often purchase the teeth of these animals at a high price. I have known Spaniards who thought themselves secure from the bites of serpents when they had a bit of deer's skin about their body. There are persons who rub their feet and hands with the juice of a radish, and believe themselves fortified against poisons. I should not take upon me to despise these safeguards, because they are approved by the experience of the Americans; but it is the part of a prudent person never to place such entire confidence in them as to lay aside caution, and lose sight of danger, which, in regard to serpents, lurks where none appears.

For this reason I constanlty exhorted the Americans to circumspection; when they had to rest in the plain at night or mid-day, to choose a situation free from bushes, reeds, and caverns, and at a distance from the banks of

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514



swallow its juice, and smoke it through a reed, giving him likewise a vial of brandy to drink. The poison at length was so much repressed by these trifling remedies that the sick man recovered his strength sufficiently to pursue his journey to the town. The warmth of the brandy counteracts the cold of the poison, and restores the heat of the stomach and of the blood. Father Gumilla declares that serpents will die if a tobacco leaf be thrust into their mouths. We learn from the same author that, in the new kingdom of Granada, the Americans drink gunpowder mixed with brandy to cure the bites of serpents, and that it produces the desired effect. The Abipones, Mocobios, and Tobas, as soon as they feel themselves bitten by a serpent, cover the wound with virgin wax, which is thought to absorb the poison. At another time they have it sucked out by their physicians. They sometimes scrape a crocodile's tooth, drink the dust in water, and at the same time bind a whole crocodile's tooth very tight on to the open wound. Our druggist at Cordoba, wishing to try the virtue of this remedy, gave an equal quantity of violent poison to two dogs, tying a crocodile's tooth round the neck of one, and not round that of the other, and they say that, whilst the latter died in a very few hours, the former recovered by means of the tooth.